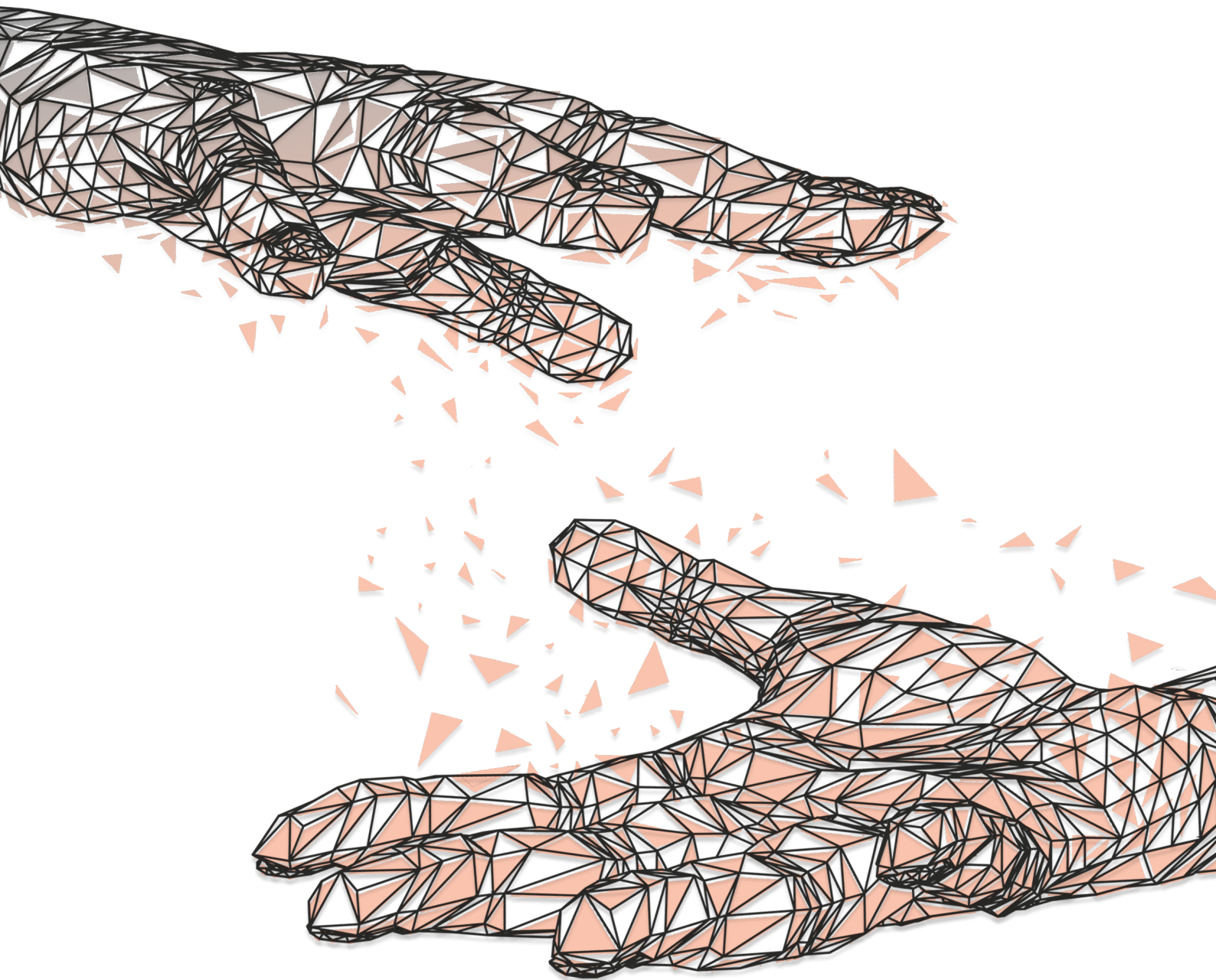


COUNSELLING PRACTITIONER BEGINNER TO ADVANCED



THE **FRAME** OF REFERENCE

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Why is it that two people can go through the same experience or situation yet reach different conclusions about what happened? Why can two people have the most traumatic upbringings in life; where one develops a healthy, positive outlook and the other goes down the path of self-destruction?

If two people are rejected by the same person, why is it that one will shrug off the rejection while the other will carry the hurt for anything up to a lifetime?

The truth is that we don't see reality, but the meaning that we give to it. We view the world through the lens of our own beliefs and our own values. This is our frame of reference.

If we're not aware of our own frame of reference, we can end up making assumptions and reaching conclusions about ourselves, others and situations that are a million miles from the truth. For example, if we interpret a counsellee's story through our own frame of reference, we are likely to form judgements of them or try to advise them. Laying our own frame of reference aside is one of the most challenging aspects of counselling.

Putting our own beliefs aside means choosing to put a stop to our own thoughts and opinions, start recognising our own assumptions and prejudices and take responsibility for dismissing these when they arise.

Let's consider an example - if an individual discloses to you that they're using illegal or dangerous drugs, and your frame of reference told you that this behaviour was negative/harmful, how might you be inclined to respond? This person's frame of reference might suggest the use of such drugs is a regular part of everyday life. If we're fixed in my own frame of reference, we're likely to miss the main points of this other person's story.

Laying aside our own beliefs allows us to start building a picture of the client's frame of reference and begin understanding why they act and behave in the way that they do.

EXERCISE 1

HURTS

What hurts have you experienced? What hurts do you still carry today? What connections can you make between these hurts and your perception of yourself, others and the world?

HISTORY

What is your personal story? What points in your history have significantly impacted the person you are today?



THE **FRAME** OF REFERENCE

RELATIONSHIPS

Consider any significant relationships in your past/present life - how have these influenced your thinking and your beliefs?

CULTURE

How has the culture in which you live influenced your thinking and your beliefs? What culturally 'normal' beliefs have you accepted that might not be so 'normal' in other cultures?

UPBRINGING

Consider your childhood upbringing and how this has influenced the person you've become today. How did you relate to your parents/siblings? What did your family teach you about yourself, others and life?

BELIEFS & RULES

What beliefs and rules are you currently subscribing to? What is the main negative belief that's holding you back from moving forward in life?

STANDARDS

What standards do you currently live your life by? Where did you learn these standards? In what ways would you like to change your standards?



THE **FRAME** OF REFERENCE

1. Without giving it too much thought, consider your immediate response/reaction to these scenarios:

- Tina informs you that her husband is very controlling and will not allow her to work

- Gordon's father has just passed away

- Laura has just told you that she regularly hits her 3-year-old son

2. Following your immediate response, take a few minutes to consider alternative responses from individuals with different frames of reference?



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